

CLAIMS

We claim:

[c1] 1. A method in a computing system for mediating among sellers in a multiple-seller marketplace, comprising:

- for each of a plurality of sellers:
 - collecting buyer feedback data characterizing the level of satisfaction of buyers with the seller;
 - collecting seller performance data characterizing the prior performance of the seller for sales made through the marketplace; and
 - determining a numerical seller score for the seller based upon the collected buyer feedback and seller performance data;
- for a selected item:
 - identifying sellers among the plurality (1) that are offering the selected item for sale, and (2) whose seller score exceeds a predetermined score threshold;
 - choosing as the featured seller of the selected item the identified seller that is offering the selected item at the lowest price;
 - receiving a request for information about the selected item;
 - in response to the received request, serving a web page containing information about the selected item and an ordering control for the selected item;
 - receiving an indication that the ordering control was activated; and
 - in response to receiving the indication that the ordering control was activated, effecting ordering of the selected item from the featured seller.

[c2] 2. The method of claim 1, wherein, for the selected item, sellers are only identified whose availability level for the selected item exceeds a predetermined availability threshold.

[c3] 3. A method in a computing system for responding to a request for information about an item, comprising:
receiving a request for information about the item;
among a plurality of sellers, identifying those (1) that are offering the item for sale, (2) whose availability level for the selected item exceeds a predetermined availability threshold, and (3) having a seller score relating to a plurality of different items offered for sale by the seller that exceeds a predetermined score threshold;
selecting as the featured seller of the item the identified seller that is offering the selected item at the lowest price; and
replying to the request for information with a web page containing both (1) information describing the item, and (2) a control that can be activated to order the item from the featured seller.

[c4] 4. The method of claim 3 wherein the identifying and selecting is performed before the receiving.

[c5] 5. The method of claim 3 wherein the identifying and selecting is performed periodically, and the most recently selected featured seller is used in replying to each of a plurality of received requests.

[c6] 6. The method of claim 3 wherein the identifying and selecting is performed after the receiving.

[c7] 7. A computing system for responding to a request for information about an item, comprising:

- a receiving subsystem that receives a request for information about the item;
- an identification subsystem that identifies, among a plurality of sellers, those (1) that are offering the item for sale, (2) whose availability level for the selected item exceeds a predetermined availability threshold, and (3) having a seller score relating to a plurality of different items offered for sale by the seller that exceeds a predetermined score threshold;
- a selection subsystem that selects as the featured seller of the item the identified seller that is offering the selected item at the lowest price; and
- a reply subsystem that replies to the request for information with a web page containing both (1) information describing the item, and (2) a control that can be activated to order the item from the featured seller.

[c8] 8. One or more generated data signals collectively conveying a page definition data structure; comprising:

content specifying the display of information describing a selected item; and content specifying the display of a control that may be activated to order the selected item from a distinguished one of a plurality of sellers, the distinguished seller being selected by offering the selected item for sale at the lowest price among those sellers of the plurality (1) that are offering the item for sale, (2) whose availability level for the selected item exceeds a predetermined availability threshold, and (3) having a seller score that exceeds a predetermined score threshold.

[c9] 9. The generated data signals of claim 8 wherein the data structure further comprises contents specifying the display of the control that may be

activated to display ordering controls that may be activated to order the selected item from a different one of the plurality of sellers other than the distinguished seller.

[c10] 10. The generated data signals of claim 9 wherein the data structure further contains contents specifying the display of one or more secondary controls that may be activated to order the selected item from a different one of the plurality of sellers other than the distinguished seller, wherein the control for the distinguished seller is displayed more prominently than the secondary controls.

[c11] 11. The generated data signals of claim 8 wherein the data structure is a web page.

[c12] 12. A method in a computer system for rating sellers of items, comprising:

operating an electronic sales infrastructure through which buyers may purchase items from a plurality of sellers;

for each seller of the plurality,

obtaining first information about the performance of the seller in purchase transactions entered into by the buyers with the seller from buyers;

obtaining second information about the performance of the seller in purchase transactions entered into by buyers with the seller from a source other than buyers; and

combining the information about the seller's performance obtained from the operation of the sales infrastructure with information about the seller's performance obtained from buyers to produce a numerical seller score for the seller.

[c13] 13. The method of claim 12, wherein, for each seller of the plurality, the second information about the performance of the seller in purchase transactions

entered into by buyers with the seller is obtained from the operation of the sales infrastructure.

[c14] 14. The method of claim 12, wherein, for each seller of the plurality, the second information about the performance of the seller in purchase transactions entered into by buyers with the seller is obtained directly from the seller.

[c15] 15. The method of claim 12 wherein information is obtained from a distinguished buyer in connection with a distinguished purchase transaction in response to a specific inquiry triggered by information obtained by operating the sales infrastructure in service of the distinguished purchase transaction.

[c16] 16. The method of claim 12 wherein each of the plurality of sellers has a name, further comprising, for each of the plurality of sellers:
determining whether the seller score produced for the seller exceeds a score threshold; and
if the seller score produced for the seller exceeds the score threshold,
displaying an recommended seller designation in conjunction with the seller's name.

[c17] 17. The method of claim 12, further comprising selecting from the plurality of sellers a default seller from which a particular item will be ordered when buyers activate a default ordering control, at least in part based upon the seller scores determined for the sellers of the plurality of sellers.

[c18] 18. The method of claim 12 wherein a seller tool exists that sellers can use to efficiently interact with the marketplace, further comprising granting access to the seller tool to each seller whose seller score exceeds a score threshold.

[c19] 19. The method of claim 12, further comprising automatically suspending from participation in the marketplace a seller whose seller score is below a score threshold.

[c20] 20. The method of claim 12, further comprising, for a search result containing search result items each corresponding to a particular seller, sorting the search result items in the search result based upon the seller score produced for the seller to which each search result item corresponds.

[c21] 21. The method of claim 12, further comprising, for a search result containing search result items each corresponding to a particular seller, filtering the search result items in the search result based upon the seller score produced for the seller to which each search result item corresponds.

[c22] 22. The method of claim 12, further comprising, for each of the plurality of the sellers:
determining whether the seller score produced for the seller is at least as large as a score threshold; and
if the seller score produced for the seller is not at least as large as the score threshold, displaying a warning designation in conjunction with the seller's name.

[c23] 23. The method of claim 12 wherein third-party credit information about the seller is further combined into the seller score produced for the seller.

[c24] 24. The method of claim 12 wherein the first information about the performance of the seller and purchase transactions entered into by buyers with the seller includes the value of ratings by buyers of the seller during a selected period of time.

[c25] 25. The method of claim 12 wherein the first information about the performance of the seller and purchase transactions entered into by buyers with the seller includes the percentage of ratings by buyers of the seller during a selected period of time that are negative feedback ratings.

[c26] 26. The method of claim 12 wherein the obtained second information about the performance of the seller in purchase transactions entered into by buyers with the seller include the percentage of transactions by the seller in which buyers successfully sought reimbursement for the transaction.

[c27] 27. A computer-readable medium whose contents cause a computer system to rate sellers of items by:

operating an electronic marketplace through which buyers may purchase items from a plurality of sellers;

for each seller of the plurality,

obtaining from the operation of the marketplace information about the performance of the seller in purchase transactions entered into by buyers with the seller;

obtaining from buyers information about the performance of the seller in purchase transactions entered into by the buyers with the seller; and

combining the information about the seller's performance obtained from the operation of the marketplace with information about the seller's performance obtained from buyers to produce a numerical seller score for the seller.

[c28] 28. One or more computer memories collectively containing a seller scoring data structure, the data structure comprising, for each of a plurality of sellers, a numerical value constituting a score for the seller, the score being derived from (1) information about the seller's performance in transactions completed using a sales infrastructure obtained by operating the sales

infrastructure , and (2) information about the seller's performance in transactions completed using a sales infrastructure obtained from buyers involved in the completed transactions.

[c29] 29. A method in a computing system for evaluating the performance of a seller, comprising:

storing information relating to one or more sales transactions by a seller obtained by facilitating the transactions for the seller;

retrieving stored information relating to each of a plurality of factors to be incorporated in a score assessing the performance of the seller;

identifying a portion of the retrieved information relating to a distinguished one of the factors that is unresolved, the unresolved portion relating to completion by the seller of the sale of a distinguished item to a distinguished buyer;

presenting to the distinguished buyer a request for additional information relating to completion by the seller of the sale of the distinguished item that resolves the unresolved distinguished factor;

in response to the presented request, receiving additional information from the distinguished buyer additional information relating to completion by the seller of the sale of the distinguished item that resolves the unresolved distinguished factor; and

generating a score assessing the performance of the seller using both the retrieved information and received additional information.

[c30] 30. The method of claim 29 wherein the retrieved information relating to the distinguished factor reflects ambiguously on the seller's performance in completing the sale of the distinguished item to the distinguished buyer.

[c31] 31. The method of claim 29 wherein the retrieved information relating to the distinguished factor was received from the seller.

[c32] 32. The method of claim 29 wherein the retrieved information relating to the distinguished factor was received from the seller and would tend to increase the score.